

**In the Claims:**

Please amend the following claims as indicated:

Claim 1. (Original): A process for recovering valuable metals from laterite ores and concentrates that are contaminated with iron, which process includes the steps of:

- (a) reducing ferric ions to ferrous ions in a leach liquor containing a valuable metal and iron in solution using a suitable reductant, the leach liquor being obtained by processing laterite ores or concentrates of the ores that contain the valuable metal and are contaminated with iron;
- (b) neutralising the liquor to reduce the free acid concentration in solution to levels suitable for nickel precipitation; and
- (c) precipitating the valuable metal using the reductant and seed particles under process conditions, including one or more of seed particle size, seed composition, and temperature, that are selected to maximise nickel precipitation and to minimise iron precipitation.

Claim 2. (Original): The process defined in claim 1 wherein the reduction step (a) includes reducing ferric ions to ferrous ions using the reductant in the presence of 40-90 g/l free acid.

Claim 3. (Currently Amended): The process defined in claim 1 ~~or claim 2~~ wherein the reductant is a gaseous reductant.

Claim 4. (Original): The process defined in claim 3 wherein the gaseous reductant is H<sub>2</sub>S.

Claim 5. (Currently Amended): The process defined in ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1 wherein the neutralisation step (b) increases the pH of the solution to 2.

Claim 6. (Currently Amended): The process defined in ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1 wherein the neutralisation step (b) maintains iron in the ferrous state.

Claim 7. (Currently Amended): The process defined in ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1 wherein the valuable metal is nickel.

Claim 8. (Currently Amended): The process defined in ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1 wherein the valuable metals are nickel and cobalt.

Claim 9. (Currently Amended): The process defined in ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1 wherein the laterite ores are ores that contain nickel in a chlorite mineral phase.

Claim 10. (Currently Amended): The process defined in ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1 wherein the process conditions for the precipitation step (c) include operating at a partial pressure of the gaseous reductant of less than 60 psi.

Claim 11. (Original): The process defined in claim 10 wherein the gas partial pressure is less than 40 psi.

Claim 12. (Original): The process defined in claim 11 wherein the gas partial pressure is less than 30 psi.

Claim 13. (Original): The process defined in claim 12 wherein the gas partial pressure be less than 25 psi.

Claim 14. (Currently Amended): The process defined in ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1 wherein the process conditions for the precipitation step (c) include operating at a liquor temperature of at least 50°C.

Claim 15. (Original): The process defined in claim 14 wherein the liquor temperature is at least 60°C.

Claim 16. (Currently Amended): The process defined in ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1 wherein the seed particles for the precipitation step (c) have a particle size of  $P_{50}$  less than 100 micron.

Claim 17. (Original): The process defined in claim 16 wherein the particle size of the seed particles is  $P_{50}$  less than 80 micron.

Claim 18. (Original): The process defined in claim 17 wherein the particle size of the seed particles be  $P_{50}$  less than 60 micron.

Claim 19. (Currently Amended): The process defined in ~~any one of claims 16 to 18~~ claim 16 wherein the seed particle concentration for the precipitation step (c) is greater than 30g/l.

Claim 20. (Original): The process defined in claim 17 wherein the seed particle concentration is greater than 40g/l.

Claim 21. (Currently Amended): The process defined in ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1 wherein the ratio of iron and the valuable metal in the leach liquor supplied to step (a) is greater than 2:1.

Claim 22. (Original): The process defined in claim 21 wherein the ratio is greater than 3:1.

Claim 23. (Original): The process defined in claim 22 wherein the ratio is greater than 5:1.